

THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

A POEM.

BY LORD BYRON.

"Tis the sunset of life's days the mystical lore,
And evening events cast their shadows before."

(V.P.B.)

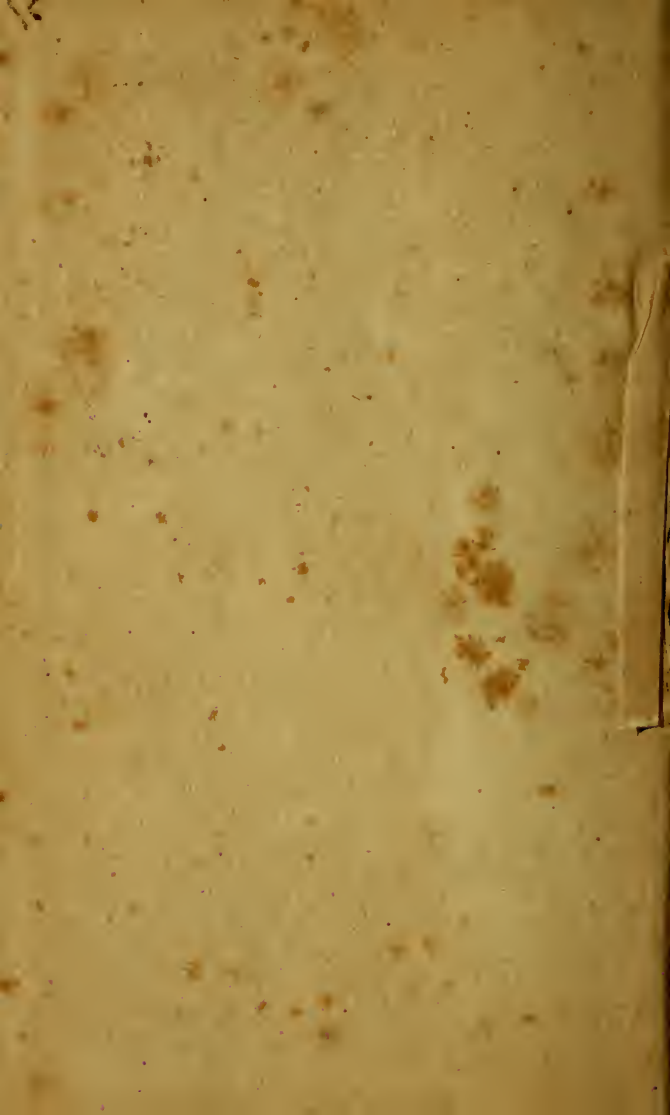
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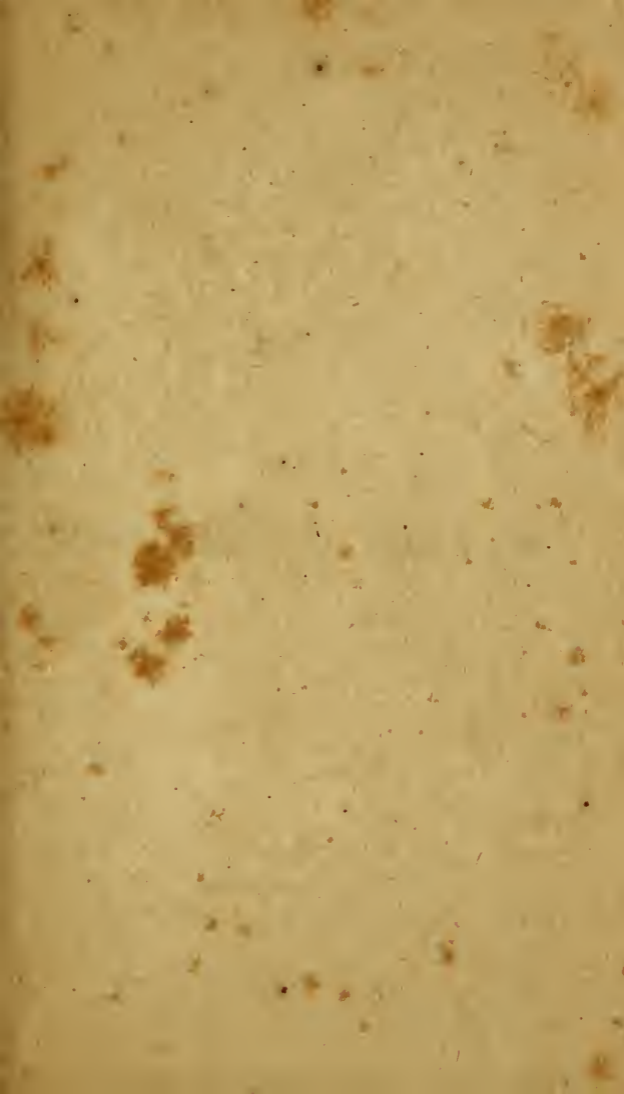
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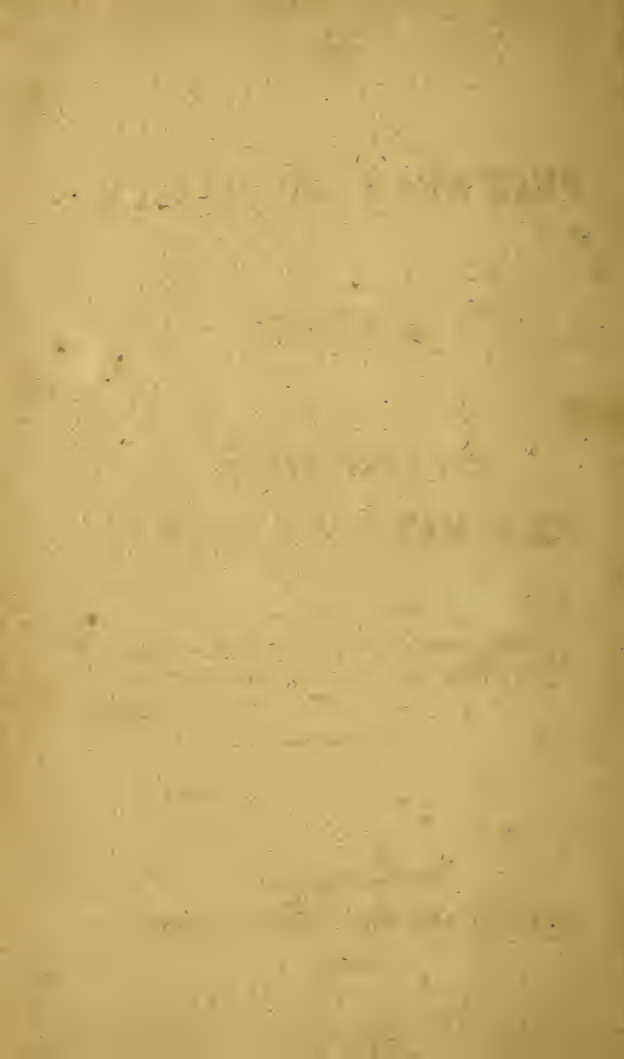
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THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.



THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

A POEM.

BY LORD BYRON.

“’Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
“And coming events cast their shadows before.”

CAMPBELL.

PHILADELPHIA :
M. CAREY AND SONS, CHESNUT STREET.

1821.

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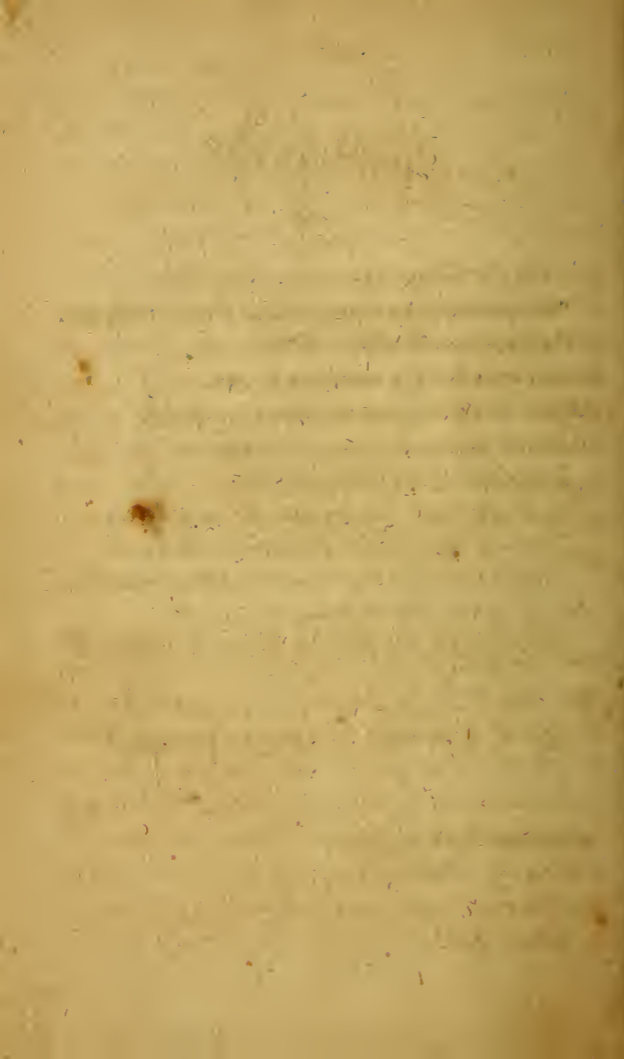
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Tv. R.
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DEDICATION.

LADY! if for the cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die,
Of the great Poet-Sire of Italy
I dare to build the imitative rhyme,
Harsh Runic copy of the South's sublime,
THOU art the cause; and howsoever I
Fall short of his immortal harmony,
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.
Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,
Spak'st; and for thee to speak and be obey'd
Are one; but only in the sunny South
Such sounds are utter'd, and such charms display'd,
So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—
Ah! to what effort would it not persuade?

Ravenna, June 21, 1819.



P R E F A C E.

IN the course of a visit to the city of Ravenna in the summer of 1819, it was suggested to the author that having composed something on the subject of Tasso's confinement, he should do the same on Dante's exile—the tomb of the poet forming one of the principal objects of interest in that city, both to the native and to the stranger.

“On this hint I spake,” and the result has been the following four cantos, in terza rima, now offered to the reader. If they are understood and approved, it is my purpose to continue the poem in various other cantos to its natural conclusion in the present age. The reader is requested to suppose that Dante addresses him in the interval between the conclusion of the *Divina Commedia* and his death, and shortly before the latter event, foretelling the for-

tunes of Italy in general in the ensuing centuries. In adopting this plan I have had in my mind the Cassandra of Lycophron, and the Prophecy of Nereus by Horace, as well as the Prophecies of Holy Writ. The measure adopted is the terza rima of Dante, which I am not aware to have seen hitherto tried in our language, except it may be by Mr. Hayley, of whose translation I never saw but one extract, quoted in the notes to Caliph Vathek; so that—if I do not err—this poem may be considered as a metrical experiment. The cantos are short, and about the same length of those of the poet whose name I have borrowed, and most probably taken in vain.

Amongst the inconveniences of authors in the present day, it is difficult for any who have a name, good or bad, to escape translation. I have had the fortune to see the fourth canto of Childe Harold translated into Italian versi sciolti—that is, a poem written in the *Spenserean stanza* into *blank verse*, without regard to the natural divisions of the stanza, or of the sense. If the present poem, being on a national topic,

should chance to undergo the same fate, I would request the Italian reader to remember that when I have failed in the imitation of his great "Padre Alighier," I have failed in imitating that which all study and few understand, since to this very day it is not yet settled what was the meaning of the allegory in the first canto of the *Inferno*, unless Count Marchetti's ingenious and probable conjecture may be considered as having decided the question.

He may also pardon my failure the more, as I am not quite sure that he would be pleased with my success, since the Italians, with a pardonable nationality, are particularly jealous of all that is left them as a nation—their literature; and in the present bitterness of the classic and romantic war, are but ill disposed to permit a foreigner even to approve or imitate them without finding some fault with his ultramontane presumption. I can easily enter into all this, knowing what would be thought in England of an Italian imitator of Milton, or if a translation of Monti, or Pindemonte, or Arici, should be held up to the rising generation as a

model for their future poetical essays. But I perceive that I am deviating into an address to the Italian reader, when my business is with the English one, and be they few or many, I must take my leave of both.

THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

CANTO I.

ONCE more in man's frail world! which I had left
So long that 'twas forgotten; and I feel
The weight of clay again,—too soon bereft
Of the immortal vision which could heal
My earthly sorrows, and to God's own skies
Lift me from that deep gulf without repeal,
Where late my ears rung with the damned cries
Of souls in hopeless bale; and from that place
Of lesser torment, whence men may arise
Pure from the fire to join the angelic race; 10
Midst whom my own bright *Beatricē* bless'd (1)
My spirit with her light; and to the base
Of the Eternal Triad! first, last, best,
Mysterious, three, sole, infinite, great God!
Soul universal! led the mortal guest,
Unblasted by the glory, though he trod
From star to star to reach the almighty throne.
Oh *Beatricē*! whose sweet limbs the sod

So long hath prest, and the cold marble stone,
Thou sole pure seraph of my earliest love, 20
Love so ineffable, and so alone,
That nought on earth could more my bosom move,
And meeting thee in heaven was but to meet
That without which my soul, like the arkless
dove,
Had wander'd still in search of, nor her feet
Relieved her wing till found; without thy light
My Paradise had still been incomplete. (2)
Since my tenth sun gave summer to my sight
Thou wert my life, the essence of my thought,
Loved ere I knew the name of love, and bright 30
Still in these dim old eyes, now overwrought
With the world's war, and years, and banishment,
And tears for thee, by other woes untaught;
For mine is not a nature to be bent
By tyrannous faction, and the brawling crowd;
And though the long, long conflict hath been spent
In vain, and never more, save when the cloud
Which overhangs the Apennine, my mind's eye
Pierces to fancy Florence, once so proud
Of me, can I return, though but to die, 40
Unto my native soil, they have not yet
Quench'd the old exile's spirit, stern and high,
But the sun, though not overcast, must set,
And the night cometh; I am old in days,

And deeds, and contemplation, and have met
Destruction face to face in all his ways.

The world hath left me, what it found me, pure,
And if I have not gather'd yet its praise;

I sought it not by any baser lure ;

Man wrongs, and Time avenges, and my name

May form a monument not all obscure, 51

Though such was not my ambition's end or aim,

To add to the vain-glorious list of those

Who dabble in the pettiness of fame,

And make men's fickle breath the wind that blows

Their sail, and deem it glory to be class'd

With conquerors, and virtue's other foes,

In bloody chronicles of ages past:

I would have had my Florence great and free: (3)

Oh Florence! Florence! unto me thou wast 60

Like that Jerusalem which the Almighty He

Wept over, "but thou wouldst not;" as the bird

Gathers its young, I would have gather'd thee

Beneath a parent pinion, hadst thou heard

My voice; but as the adder, deaf and fierce,

Against the breast that cherish'd thee was stirr'd

Thy venom, and my state thou didst amerce,

And doom this body forfeit to the fire.

Alas! how bitter is his country's curse

To him who *for* that country would expire, 70

But did not merit to expire *by* her,

And loves her, loves her even in her ire.

The day may come when she will cease to err,

The day may come she would be proud to have

The dust she dooms to scatter, and transfer (4)

Of him, whom she denied a home, the grave.

But this shall not be granted ; let my dust

Lie where it falls ; nor shall the soil which gave

Me breath, but in her sudden fury thrust

Me forth to breathe elsewhere, so reassume 80

My indignant bones, because her angry gust

Forsooth is over, and repeal'd her doom ;

No,—she denied me what was mine—my roof,

And shall not have what is not hers—my tomb.

Too long her armed wrath hath kept aloof

The breast which would have bled for her, the
heart

That beat, the mind that was temptation proof,

The man who fought, toil'd, travell'd, and each part

Of a true citizen fulfill'd, and saw

For his reward the Guelf's ascendant art 90

Pass his destruction even into a law.

These things are not made for forgetfulness,

Florence shall be forgotten first ; too raw

The wound, too deep the wrong, and the distress

Of such endurance too prolong'd to make

My pardon greater, her injustice less,

Though late repented ; yet—yet for her sake

I feel some fonder yearnings, and for thine,
My own Beatricē, I would hardly take
Vengeance upon the land which once was mine,
And still is hallow'd by thy dust's return, 101
Which would protect the murderess like a
shrine,

And save ten thousand foes by thy sole urn.
Though, like old Marius from Minturnæ's marsh
And Carthage ruins, my lone breast may burn
At times with evil feelings hot and harsh,
And sometimes the last pangs of a vile foe
Writhe in a dream before me, and o'erarch
My brow with hopes of triumph,—let them go!

Such are the last infirmities of those 110
Who long have suffer'd more than mortal woe,
And yet being mortal still, have no repose
But on the pillow of Revenge—Revenge,
Who sleeps to dream of blood, and waking
glows

With the oft-baffled, slakeless thirst of change,
When we shall mount again, and they that trod
Be trampled on, while Death and Até range
O'er humbled heads and sever'd necks—Great
Ged!

Take these thoughts from me—to thy hands I
yield
My many wrongs, and thine almighty rod 120

Will fall on those who smote me,—be my shield!
 As thou hast been in peril, and in pain,
 In turbulent cities, and the tented field—
 In toil, and many troubles borne in vain
 For Florence.—I appeal from her to Thee!
 Thee, whom I late saw in thy loftiest reign,
 Even in that glorious vision, which to see
 And live was never granted until now,
 And yet thou hast permitted this to me.
 Alas! with what a weight upon my brow 130
 The sense of earth and earthly things come back,
 Corrosive passions, feelings dull and low,
 The heart's quick throb upon the mental rack,
 Long day, and dreary night; the retrospect
 Of half a century bloody and black,
 And the frail few years I may yet expect
 Hoary and hopeless, but less hard to bear,
 For I have been too long and deeply wreck'd
 On the lone rock of desolate Despair
 To lift my eyes more to the passing sail 140
 Which shuns that reef so horrible and bare;
 Nor raise my voice—for who would heed my wail?
 I am not of this people, nor this age,
 And yet my harpings will unfold a tale
 Which shall preserve these times when not a page
 Of their perturbed annals could attract
 An eye to gaze upon their civil rage

Did not my verse embalm full many an act
Worthless as they who wrought it: 'tis the doom
Of spirits of my order to be rack'd 150

In life, to wear their hearts out, and consume
Their days in endless strife, and die alone;
Then future thousands crowd around their tomb,
And pilgrims come from climes where they have
known

The name of him—who now is but a name,
And wasting homage o'er the sullen stone,
Spread his—by him unheard, unheeded—fame;
And mine at least hath cost me dear: to die
Is nothing; but to wither thus—to tame
My mind down from its own infinity— 160

To live in narrow ways with little men,
A common sight to every common eye,
A wanderer, while even wolves can find a den,
Ripp'd from all kindred, from all home, all things
That make communion sweet, and soften pain—
To feel me in the solitude of kings
Without the power that makes them bear a
crown—

To envy every dove his nest and wings
Which waft him where the Apennine looks down
On Arno, till he perches, it may be, 170
Within my all inexorable town,
Where yet my boys are, and that fatal she, (5)

Their mother, the cold partner who hath brought
Destruction for a dowry—this to see
And feel, and know without repair, hath taught
A bitter lesson ; but it leaves me free :
I have not vilely found, nor basely sought,
They made an Exile—not a slave of me,

THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

==
CANTO II.

THE Spirit of the fervent days of Old,
When words were things that came to pass, and
thought
Flash'd o'er the future, bidding men behold
Their children's children's doom already brought
Forth from the abyss of time which is to be,
The chaos of events, where lie half-wrought
Shapes that must undergo mortality ;
What the great Seers of Israel wore within,
That spirit was on them, and is on me,
And if, Cassandra-like, amidst the din 10
Of conflict none will hear, or hearing heed
This voice from out the Wilderness, the sin
Be theirs, and my own feelings be my meed,
The only guerdon I have ever known.
Hast thou not bled ? and hast thou still to bleed,
Italia ? Ah ! to me such things, foreshown
With dim sepulchral light, bid me forget

In thine irreparable wrongs my own ;
 We can have but one country, and even yet
 Thou'rt mine—my bones shall be within thy
 breast, 20

My soul within thy language, which once set
 With our old Roman sway in the wide West ;
 But I will make another tongue arise
 As lofty and more sweet, in which exprest
 The hero's ardour, or the lover's sighs,
 Shall find alike such sounds for every theme
 That every word, as brilliant as thy skies,
 Shall realize a poet's proudest dream,
 And make thee Europe's nightingale of song ;
 So that all present speech to thine shall seem
 The note of meaner birds, and every tongue 31

Confess its barbarism when compared with thine.
 This shalt thou owe to him thou didst so wrong,
 Thy Tuscan Bard, the banish'd Ghibelline.

Woe ! woe ! the veil of coming centuries
 Is rent,—a thousand years which yet supine
 Lie like the ocean waves ere winds arise,
 Heaving in dark and sullen undulation,
 Float from eternity into these eyes ;
 The storms yet sleep, the clouds still keep their
 station, 40

The unborn earthquake yet is in the womb,
 The bloody chaos yet expects creation,

But all things are disposing for thy doom ;
The elements await but for the word,
“ Let there be darkness ! ” and thou grow’st a
tomb !

Yes ! thou, so beautiful, shalt feel the sword,
Thou, Italy ! so fair that Paradise,
Revived in thee, blooms forth to man restored :
Ah ! must the sons of Adam lose it twice ?

Thou, Italy ! whose ever golden fields, 50
Plough’d by the sunbeams solely, would suffice
For the world’s granary ; thou, whose sky heaven
gilds

With brighter stars, and robes with deeper blue ;
Thou, in whose pleasant places Summer builds
Her palace, in whose cradle Empire grew,
And form’d the Eternal City’s ornaments
From spoils of kings whom freemen overthrew ;
Birthplace of heroes, sanctuary of saints,
Where earthly first, then heavenly glory made
Her home ; thou, all which fondest fancy paints,
And finds her prior vision but portray’d 61

In feeble colours, when the eye—from the Alp
Of horrid snow, and rock, and shaggy shade
Of desert-loving pine, whose emerald scalp
Nods to the storm—dilates and dotes o’er thee,
And wistfully implores, as ’twere, for help
To see thy sunny fields, my Italy,

Nearer and nearer yet, and dearer still
 The more approach'd, and dearest were they
 free,

Thou—Thou must wither to each tyrant's will: 70
 The Goth hath been,—the German, Frank, and
 Hun

Are yet to come,—and on the imperial hill,
 Ruin, already proud of the deeds done
 By the old barbarians, there awaits the new,
 Throned on the Palatine, while lost and won
 Rome at her feet lies bleeding, and the hue
 Of human sacrifice and Roman slaughter
 Troubles the clotted air, of late so blue,
 And deepens into red the saffron water 79

Of Tiber, thick with dead; the helpless priest,
 And still more helpless nor less holy daughter,
 Vow'd to their God, have shrieking fled, and ceased
 Their ministry: the nations take their prey,
 Iberian, Almain, Lombard, and the beast
 And bird, wolf, vulture, more humane than they
 Are; these but gorge the flesh and lap the gore
 Of the departed, and then go their way;
 But those, the human savages, explore
 All paths of torture, and insatiate yet,
 With Ugolino hunger prowl for more. 90

Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and
 set; (6)

The chiefless army of the dead, which late
Beneath the traitor Prince's banner met,
Hath left its leader's ashes at the gate ;
Had but the royal Rebel lived, perchance
Thou hadst been spared, but his involved thy
fate.

Oh! Rome, the spoiler or the spoil of France,
From Brennus to the Bourbon, never, never
Shall foreign standard to thy walls advance
But Tiber shall become a mournful river. (100
Oh! when the strangers pass the Alps and Po,
Crush them, ye rocks! floods, overwhelm them, and
for ever!

Why sleep the idle avalanches so,
To topple on the lonely pilgrim's head?
Why doth Eridanus but overflow
The peasant's harvest from his turbid bed?
Were not each barbarous horde a nobler prey?
Over Cambyses' host the desert spread
Her sandy ocean, and the sea waves' sway
Roll'd over Pharaoh and his thousands,—why,
Mountains and waters, do ye not as they? 111
And you, ye men! Romans, who dare not die,
Sons of the conquerors who overthrew
Those who overthrew proud Xerxes, where yet lie
The dead whose tomb Oblivion never knew,
Are the Alps weaker than Thermopylæ?

Their passes more alluring to the view
 Of an invader? is it they, or ye,
 That to each host the mountain-gate unbar,
 And leave the march in peace, the passage free?
 Why, Nature's self detains the victor's car 121
 And makes your land impregnable, if earth
 Could be so; but alone she will not war,
 Yet aids the warrior worthy of his birth
 In a soil where the mothers bring forth men:
 Not so with those whose souls are little worth;
 For them no fortress can avail,—the den
 Of the poor reptile which preserves its sting
 Is more secure than walls of adamant, when
 The hearts of those within are quivering. 130
 Are ye not brave? Yes, yet the Ausonian soil
 Hath hearts, and hands, and arms, and hosts to
 bring
 Against Oppression; but how vain the toil,
 While still Division sows the seeds of woe
 And weakness, till the stranger reaps the spoil.
 Oh! my own beauteous land! so long laid low,
 So long the grave of thy own children's hopes,
 When there is but required a single blow
 To break the chain, yet—yet the Avenger stops,
 And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and
 thee, 140

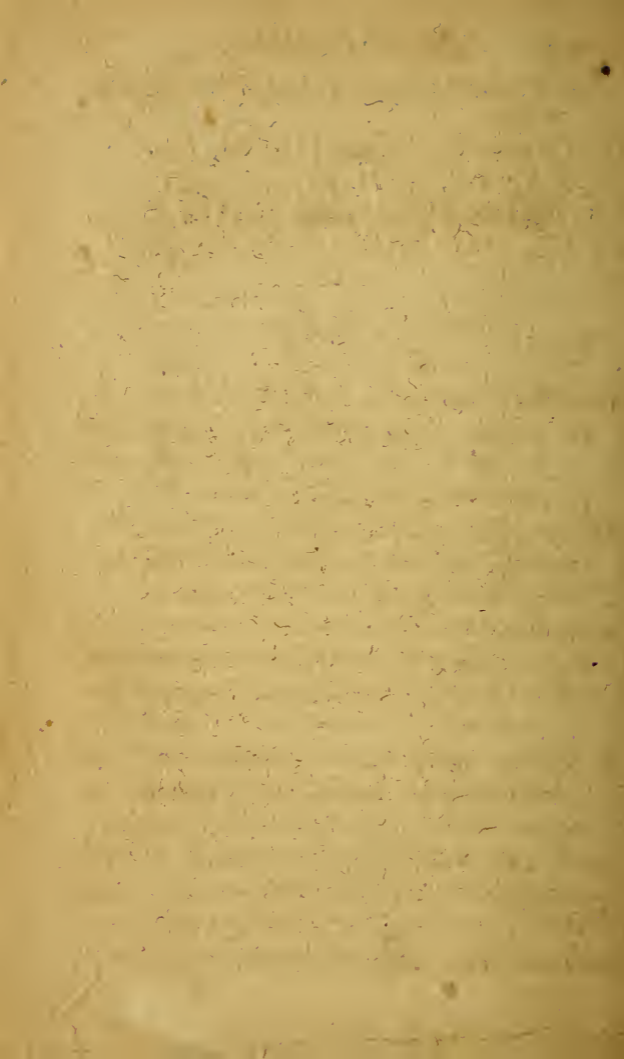
And join their strength to that which with thee
copes ;

What is there wanting then to set thee free,

And show thy beauty in its fullest light ?

To make the Alps impassable ; and we,

Her sons, may do this with *one* deed——Unite !



THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

CANTO III.

FROM out the mass of never dying ill,
The Plague, the Prince, the Stranger, and the
Sword,
Vials of wrath but emptied to refill
And flow again, I cannot all record
That crowds on my prophetic eye: the earth
And ocean written o'er would not afford
Space for the annal, yet it shall go forth;
Yes, all, though not by human pen, is graven,
There where the farthest* suns and stars have
birth.
Spread like a banner at the gate of heaven, 10
The bloody scroll of our millennial wrongs
Waves, and the echo of our groans is driven
Athwart the sound of archangelic songs,
And Italy, the martyr'd nation's gore,
Will not in vain arise to where belongs
Omnipotence and mercy evermore:

Like to a harpstring stricken by the wind,
 The sound of her lament shall, rising o'er
 The seraph voices, touch the Almighty Mind.
 Meantime I, humblest of thy sons, and of 20
 Earth's dust by immortality refined
 To sense and suffering, though the vain may scoff,
 And tyrants threat, and meeker victims bow
 Before the storm because its breath is rough,
 To thee, my country! whom before, as now,
 I loved and love, devote the mournful lyre
 And melancholy gift high powers allow
 To read the future; and if now my fire
 Is not as once it shone o'er thee, forgive!
 I but foretell thy fortunes—then expire; 30
 Think not that I would look on them and live.
 A spirit forces me to see and speak,
 And for my guerdon grants *not* to survive;
 My heart shall be pour'd over thee and break:
 Yet for a moment, ere I must resume
 Thy sable web of sorrow, let me take
 Over the gleams that flash athwart thy gloom
 A softer glimpse; some stars shine through thy
 night,
 And many meteors, and above thy tomb
 Leans sculptured Beauty, which Death cannot
 blight; 40
 And from thine ashes boundless spirits rise

To give thee honour, and the earth delight;
 Thy soil shall still be pregnant with the wise,
 The gay, the learn'd, the generous, and the
 brave,

Native to thee as summer to thy skies,
 Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave, (7)
 Discoverers of new worlds, which take their
 name; (8)

For *thee* alone they have no arm to save,
 And all thy recompense is in their fame,
 A noble one to them, but not to thee— 50

Shall they be glorious, and thou still the same?
 Oh! more than these illustrious far shall be

The being—and even yet he may be born—
 The mortal saviour who shall set thee free,
 And see thy diadem, so changed and worn

By fresh barbarians, on thy brow replaced;
 And the sweet sun replenishing thy morn,
 Thy moral morn, too long with clouds defaced
 And noxious vapours from Avernus risen,

Such as all they must breathe who are debased
 By servitude, and have the mind in prison. 61

Yet through this centuried eclipse of woe
 Some voices shall be heard, and earth shall
 listen;

Poets shall follow in the path I show,

And make it broader; the same brilliant sky

Which cheers the birds to song shall bid them
 glow,
 And raise their notes as natural and high;
 Tuneful shall be their numbers: they shall sing
 Many of love, and some of liberty,
 But few shall soar upon that eagle's wing, 70
 And look in the sun's face with eagle's gaze
 All free and fearless as the feather'd king,
 But fly more near the earth; how many a phrase
 Sublime shall lavish'd be on some small prince
 In all the prodigality of praise!
 And language, eloquently false, evince
 The harlotry of genius, which, like beauty,
 Too oft forgets its own self-reverence,
 And looks on prostitution as a duty.

(9) He who once enters in a tyrant's hall X 80
 As guest is slave, his thoughts become a booty,
 And the first day which sees the chain enthrall
 A captive, sees his half of manhood gone— (10)
 The soul's emasculation saddens all
 His spirit; thus the Bard too near the throne
 Quails from his inspiration, bound to *please*,—
 How servile is the task to please alone!
 To smooth the verse to suit his sovereign's ease
 And royal leisure, nor too much prolong
 Aught save his eulogy, and find, and seize, 90
 Or force, or forge fit argument of song!

Thus trammell'd, thus condemn'd to Flattery's
trebles,

He toils through all, still trembling to be wrong:
For fear some noble thoughts, like heavenly rebels,

Should rise up in high treason to his brain,
He sings, as the Athenian spoke, with pebbles
In 's mouth, lest truth should stammer through his
strain.

But out of the long file of sonneteers

'There shall be some who will not sing in vain,
And he, their prince, shall rank among my

peers, (11)

100

And love shall be his torment; but his grief
Shall make an immortality of tears,

And Italy shall hail him as the Chief

Of Poet-lovers, and his higher song

Of Freedom wreath him with as green a leaf.
But in a farther age shall rise along

The banks of Po, two greater still than he;

The world which smiled on him shall do them
wrong

Till they are ashes, and repose with me.

The first will make an epoch with his lyre, 110

And fill the earth with feats of chivalry:

His fancy like a rainbow, and his fire,

Like that of heaven, immortal, and his thought

Borne onward with a wing that cannot tire;

Pleasure shall, like a butterfly new caught,
 Flutter her lovely pinions o'er his theme,
 And Art itself seem into Nature wrought!
 By the transparency of his bright dream.—
 The second, of a tenderer, sadder mood,
 Shall pour his soul out o'er Jerusalem; 120
 He, too, shall sing of arms, and Christian blood
 Shed where Christ bled for man; and his high
 harp
 Shall, by the willow over Jordan's flood,
 Revive a song of Sion, and the sharp
 Conflict, and final triumph of the brave
 And pious, and the strife of hell to warp
 Their hearts from their great purpose, until wave
 The red-cross banners where the first red Cross
 Was crimson'd from his veins who died to save,
 Shall be his sacred argument; the loss 130
 Of years, of favour, freedom, even of fame
 Contested for a time, while the smooth gloss
 Of courts would slide o'er his forgotten name,
 And call captivity a kindness, meant
 To shield him from insanity or shame,
 Such shall be his meet guerdon! who was sent
 To be Christ's Laureate—they reward him well!
 Florence dooms me but death or banishment,
 Ferrara him a pittance and a cell,
 Harder to bear and less deserved, for I 140

Had stung the factions which I strove to quell ;
But this meek man, who with a lover's eye
Will look on earth and heaven, and who will
deign

To embalm with his celestial flattery
As poor a thing as e'er was spawn'd to reign,
What will *he* do to merit such a doom ?
Perhaps he'll *love*,—and is not love in vain
Torture enough without a living tomb ?
Yet it will be so—he and his compeer,
The Bard of Chivalry, will both consume 150
In penury and pain too many a year,
And, dying in despondency, bequeath
To the kind world, which scarce will yield a
tear,

A hermitage enriching all who breathe
With the wealth of a genuine poet's soul,
And to their country a redoubled wreath,
Unmatch'd by time ; not Hellas can unroll
Through her olympiads two such names, though
one

Of hers be mighty ;—and is this the whole
Of such men's destiny beneath the sun ? 160
Must all the finer thoughts, the thrilling sense,
The electric blood with which their arteries run,
Their body's self turn'd soul with the intense
Feeling of that which is, and fancy of

That which should be, to such a recompense
Conduct ? shall their bright plumage on the rough
Storm be still scattered ? Yes, and it must be,
For, form'd of far too penetrable stuff,
These birds of Paradise but long to flee
Back to their native mansion, soon they find 170
Earth's mist with their pure pinions not agree,
And die or are degraded, for the mind
Succumbs to long infection, and despair,
And vulture passions flying close behind,
Await the moment to assail and tear ;
And when at length the winged wanderers stoop,
Then is the prey-bird's triumph, then they share
The spoil, o'erpower'd at length by one fell swoop.
Yet some have been untouch'd, who learn'd to
bear,
Some whom no power could ever force to droop,
Who could resist themselves even, hardest care !
And task most hopeless ; but some such have
been, 182
And if my name amongst the number were,
That destiny austere, and yet serene,
Were prouder than more dazzling fame unblest ;
The Alp's snow summit nearer heaven is seen
Than the volcano's fierce eruptive crest,
Whose splendour from the black abyss is flung,

While the scorch'd mountain, from whose burn-
ing breast

A temporary torturing flame is wrung, 190

Shines for a night of terror, then repels

Its fire back to the hell from whence it sprung,

The hell which in its entrails ever dwells.

THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

==
CANTO IV.

MANY are poets who have never penn'd
Their inspiration, and perchance the best :
They felt, and loved, and died, but would not
 lend
Their thoughts to meaner beings; they compress'd
The god within them, and rejoin'd the stars
Unlaurell'd upon earth, but far more blest
Than those who are degraded by the jars
Of passion, and their frailties link'd to fame,
Conquerors of high renown, but full of scars.
Many are poets but without the name, 10
For what is poesy but to create
From overfeeling good or ill; and aim
At an external life beyond our fate,
And be the new Prometheus of new men,
Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,
Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
And vultures to the heart of the bestower,

Who, having lavish'd his high gift in vain,
Lies chain'd to his lone rock by the sea-shore?

So be it: we can bear.—But thus all they, 20

Whose intellect is an o'ermastering power
Which still recoils from its encumbering clay

Or lightens it to spirit, whatso'er

The form which their creations may essay,
Are bards; the kindled marble's bust may wear

More poesy upon its speaking brow

Than aught less than the Homeric page may
bear;

One noble stroke with a whole life may glow,

Or deify the canvas till it shine

With beauty so surpassing all below, 30

That they who kneel to idols so divine

Break no commandment, for high heaven is there

Transfused, transfigured: and the line

Of poesy, which peoples but the air

With thought and beings of our thought reflected,

Can do no more: then let the artist share

The palm, he shares the peril, and dejected

Faints o'er the labour unapproved—Alas!

Despair and Genius are too oft connected.

Within the ages which before me pass 40

Art shall resume and equal even the sway

Which with Apelles and old Phidias

She held in Hellas' unforgotten day.

Ye shall be taught by Ruin to revive
The Grecian forms at least from their decay,
And Roman souls at last again shall live
In Roman works wrought by Italian hands,
And temples, loftier than the old temples, give
New wonders to the world; and while still stands
The austere Pantheon, into heaven shall soar 50
A dome, (12) its image, while the base expands
Into a fane surpassing all before,
Such as all flesh shall flock to kneel in: ne'er
Such sight hath been unfolded by a door
As this, to which all nations shall repair
And lay their sins at this huge gate of heaven.
And the bold Architect unto whose care
The daring charge to raise it shall be given,
Whom all arts shall acknowledge as their lord,
Whether into the marble chaos driven 60
His chisel bid the Hebrew, (13) at whose word
Israel left Egypt, stop the waves in stone,
Or hues of hell be by his pencil pour'd
Over the damn'd before the Judgment throne, (14)
Such as I saw them, such as all shall see,
Or fanes be built of grandeur yet unknown,
The stream of his great thoughts shall spring from
me, (15)
The Ghibelline, who traversed the three realms
Which form the empire of eternity.

Amidst the clash of swords, and clang of helms,
The age which I anticipate, no less 71
Shall be the Age of Beauty, and while whelms
Calamity the nations with distress,
The genius of my country shall arise,
A Cedar towering o'er the Wilderness,
Lovely in all its branches to all eyes,
Fragrant as fair, and recognized afar,
Wafting its native incense through the skies.
Sovereigns shall pause amidst their sport of war,
Wean'd for an hour from blood, to turn and
gaze 80
On canvas or on stone; and they who mar
All beauty upon earth, compell'd to praise,
Shall feel the power of that which they destroy;
And Art's mistaken gratitude shall raise
To tyrants who but take her for a toy
Emblems and monuments, and prostitute
Her charms to pontiffs proud, (16) who but em-
ploy
The man of genius as the meanest brute
To bear a burthen, and to serve a need,
To sell his labours, and his soul to boot: 90
Who toils for nations may be poor indeed
But free; who sweats for monarchs is no more
Than the gilt chamberlain, who, clothed and
flee'd,

Stands sleek and slavish, bowing at his door.

Oh, Power that rulest and inspirest ! how

Is it that they on earth, whose earthly power
Is likest thine in heaven in outward show,

Least like to thee in attributes divine,

Tread on the universal necks that bow,

And then assure us that their rights are thine ? 100

And how is it that they, the sons of fame,

Whose inspiration seems to them to shine

From high, they whom the nations ofttest name,

Must pass their days in penury and pain,

Or step to grandeur through the paths of shame,

And wear a deeper brand, and gaudier chain ?

Or if their destiny be born aloof

From lowliness, or tempted thence in vain,

In their own souls sustain a harder proof,

The inner war of passions deep and fierce ? 110

Florence ! when thy harsh sentence razed my
roof,

I loved thee ; but the vengeance of my verse,

The hate of injuries which every year

Makes greater, and accumulates my curse,

Shall live, outliving all thou holdest dear,

Thy pride, thy wealth, thy freedom, and even
that,

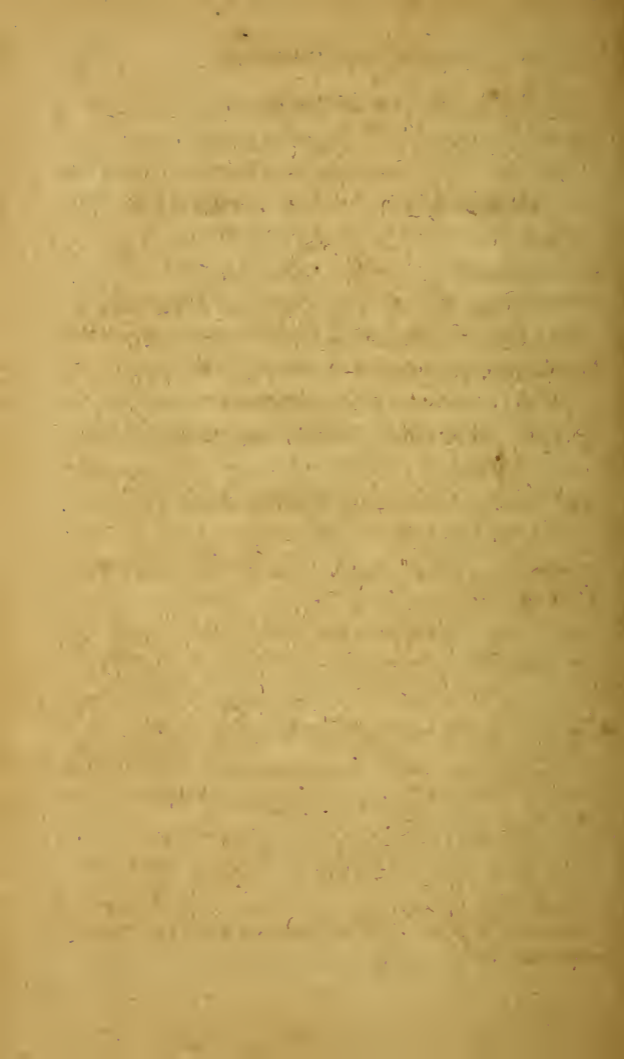
The most infernal of all evils here,

The sway of petty tyrants in a state ;

For such sway is not limited to kings,
 And demagogues yield to them but in date 120
 As swept off sooner; in all deadly things
 Which make men hate themselves, and one an-
 other,
 In discord, cowardice, cruelty, all that springs
 From Death the Sin-born's incest with his mother,
 In rank oppression in its rudest shape,
 The faction Chief is but the Sultan's brother,
 And the worst despot's far less human ape :
 Florence! when this lone spirit, which so long
 Yearn'd, as the captive toiling at escape,
 To fly back to thee in despite of wrong, 130
 An exile, saddest of all prisoners,
 Who has the whole world for a dungeon strong,
 Seas, mountains, and the horizon's verge for bars,
 Which shut him from the sole small spot of earth
 Where—whatsoe'er his fate—he still were hers,
 His country's, and might die where he had birth—
 Florence! when this lone spirit shall return
 To kindred spirits, thou wilt feel my worth,
 And seek to honour with an empty urn
 The ashes thou shalt ne'er obtain—Alas! 140
 “What have I done to thee, my people?” (17)
 Stern
 Are all thy dealings, but in this they pass
 The limits of man's common malice, for

All that a citizen could be I was ;
Raised by thy will, all thine in peace or war,
And for this thou hast warr'd with me.—'Tis
done :

I may not overleap the eternal bar
Built up between us, and will die alone,
Beholding, with the dark eye of a seer,
The evil days to gifted souls foreshown, 150
Foretelling them to those who will not hear,
As in the old time, till the hour be come
When Truth shall strike their eyes through many
a tear,
And make them own the Prophet in his tomb.



NOTES
TO THE
PROPHECY OF DANTE.

Note 1, page 11, line 11.

Midst whom my own bright Beatricē bless'd.

The reader is requested to adopt the Italian pronunciation of Beatricē, sounding all the syllables.

Note 2, page 12, line 9.

My Paradise had still been incomplete.

“Che sol per le belle opre

“Che fanno in Cielo il sole e l' altre stelle

“Dentro di lui *si crede il Paradiso,*

“Così se guardi fiso

“Pensar ben dèi ch' ogni terren' piacere.”

Canzone, in which Dante describes the person of Beatrice, Strophe third.

Note 3, page 13, line 15.

I would have had my Florence great and free.

“L' Esilio che m' è dato onor mi tegno.

* * * * *

“Cader tra' buoni è pur di lode degno.”

Sonnet of Dante,

in which he represents Right, Generosity, and Temperance, as banished from among men, and seeking refuge from Love, who inhabits his bosom.

Note 4, page 14, line 4.

The dust she dooms to scatter.

“Ut si quis predictorum ullo tempore in fortiam dicti communis pervenerit, talis perveniens igne comburatur, sic quod moriatur.”

Second sentence of Florence against Dante, and the fourteen accused with him.—The Latin is worthy of the sentence.

Note 5, page 17, last line.

Where yet my boys are, and that fatal she.

This lady, whose name was *Gemma*, sprung from one of the most powerful Guelf families, named Donati. Corso Donati was the principal adversary of the Ghibellines. She is described as being "*Admodum morosa, ut de Xantippe Socratis philosophi conjuge scriptum esse legimus,*" according to Giannozzo Manetti. But Lionardo Aretino is scandalized with Boccace, in his life of Dante, for saying that literary men should not marry. "Qui il Boccaccio non ha pazienza, e dice, le mogli esser contrarie angli studj; e non si ricorda che Socrate il più nobile filosofo che mai fusse ebbe moglie, e figliuoli e uffici della Repubblica mella sua Città; e Aristotele che, &c. &c. ebbe due mogli in varj tempi, ed ebbe figliuoli, e ricchezze assai.—E Marco Tullio—e Catone—e Varrone, e Seneca—ebbero moglie," &c. &c. It is odd that honest Lionardo's examples, with the exception of Seneca, and, for any thing I know, of Aristotle, are not the most felicitous. Tully's Terentia, and Socrates' Xantippe, by no means contributed to their husbands' happiness, whatever they might do to their philosophy;—Cato gave away his wife—of Varro's we know nothing—and of Seneca's, only that she was disposed to die with him, but recovered, and lived several years afterwards. But, says Lionardo, "L' uomo è animale civile, secondo piace a tutti i filosofi." And thence concludes that the greatest proof of the *animal's civism* is "la prima congiunzione, dalla quale moltiplicata nasce la Città."

Note 6, page 22, last line.

Nine moons shall rise o'er scenes like this and set.

See "Sacco di Roma," generally attributed to Guicciardini. There is another written by a Jacopo Buonaparte, Gentiluomo Samminiatese che vi si trovò presente.

Note 7, page 29, line 5.

Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave.

Alexander of Parma, Spinola, Pescara, Eugene of Savoy, Montecucco.

Note 8, page 29, line 6.

Discoverers of new worlds, which take their name.

Columbus, Americus Vesputius, Sebastian Cabot.

Note 9, page 30, line 15.

He who once enters in a tyrant's hall, &c.

A verse from the Greek tragedians, with which Pompey took leave of Cornelia on entering the boat in which he was slain.

Note 10, page 30, line 18.

And the first day which sees the chain enthral, &c.

The verse and sentiment are taken from Homer.

Note 11, page 31, line 9.

And he, their prince, shall rank among my peers.

Petrarch.

Note 12, page 39, line 8.

A dome, its image.

The cupola of St. Peter's.

Note 13, page 39, line 18.

His chisel bid the Hebrew.

The statue of Moses on the monument of Julius II.

SONETTO.

Di Giovanni Battista Zappi.

Chi è costui, che in dura pietra scolto,
 Siede gigante; e le più illustre, e conte
 Prove dell' arte avvanza, e ha vive, e pron
 Le labbia sì, che le parole as
 Quest' è Mosè; ben me'l dice

Onor del mento, e' l doppio raggio in fronte,
 Quest' è Mose, quando scendea del monte,
 E gran parte del Nume avea nel volto.
 Tal era allor, che le sonanti, e vaste
 Acque ei sospese a sè d' intorno, e tale.
 Quando il mar chiuse, e ne fè tomba altrui.
 E voi sue turbe un rio vitello alzate?
 Alzata aveste imago a questa eguale!
 Ch' era men fallo l' adorar costui.

Note 14, page 39, line 21.

Over the damn'd before the Judgment throne.
 The Last Judgment in the Sistine chapel.

Note 15, page 39, line 24.

The stream of his great thoughts shall spring from me.

I have read somewhere (if I do not err, for I cannot recollect where) that Dante was so great a favourite of Michel Angiolo's, that he had designed the whole of the Divina Commedia; but that the volume containing these studies was lost by sea.

Note 16, page 40, line 18.

Her charms to pontiffs proud, who but employ, &c.

See the treatment of Michel Angiolo by Julius II., and his neglect by Leo X.

Note 17, page 42, line 23.

"What have I done to thee, my people?"

"E scrisse più volte non solamente a particolari cittadini del reggimento, ma ancora al popolo, e intra l' altre un Epistola assai lunga che comincia:—'Popule mi, quid feci tibi?'"

Vita di Dante scritta da Lionardo Aretino.



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